

## **Wines Park**

### **By Richard Van Wagoner**

On 7 January, 1908, Margaret Taylor Wines died in Palo Alto, California. Her husband, prominent Lehi businessman Ira D. Wines-- who had earlier achieved fame as a pony express rider and overland Stage driver--desired to build a lasting memorial in honor of his wife. He envisioned a park with a building in the center which would display his wife's picture and some of her momentos. On 14 April, 1908, he met with the Lehi City Council and offered to donate an entire block of his property to the community provided it became Margaret Wines Park. His representative, Senator John Y. Smith made the proposal to a receptive audience of citizens during a mass meeting on 21 April 1908.

Three years passed before anything further was done on the matter. Mayor Southwick and the city council coordinated a 4 February 1911 work party to clear the block of the rows of old poplar trees, some aged fencing, and the old McAfee and Goodwin homes on the east half of the block. Aside from laying cement sidewalks on the east and west nothing was done to improve the site. This lack of activity prompted rumors that Wines had withdrawn his offer of the parkside.

City officials met with him on November 12, 1912 and the benefactor stressed that he had not withdrawn his offer but the city must make improvements on the park to meet the conditions of his gift. City officials told Wines they would call a special session of the city council to reconsider his proposal.

The following week the council voted to make the following overtures to Wines. "If the City would agree to provide a stated amount for its maintenance for a period of twenty years, would Mr. Wines then give the City a clear deed for same without any further obligation." Wines was slow to respond. It was not until June 5, 1914 that he wrote to officials promising a warranty deed if the city would:

1. Install a substantial fence around the block at once.

2. Spend \$1,000 for landscaping the park.
3. Spend \$500 per year on maintaining the park for a twenty year period.

Wines also gave permission for the city to build a city hall or court house on the property (this was never done). He added that if these conditions were not met the property would revert back to him or his heirs.

City officials re-accepted Wine's offer and began in earnest to meet his specifications. The June 13, 1914 Lehi Banner noted the city had purchased 120 square posts and over 3,000 feet of one-and one-half-inch pipe for the two-rail pipe fence to enclose the block. A man of his word, Wines filed a warranty deed just before Christmas 1914 specifying that if the town kept its end of the bargain the absolute title could be vested in the city eighteen years hence.

Although this seems a bargain by today's standards, there were detractors who opposed accepting Wine's offer. Lehi's municipality and school districts were then \$120,000 in debt and 1914 was a deficit spending year. One critic, writing in the Lehi Department of the "American Fork Citizen" on April 24, 1915 recommended that the problem be resolved by approaching Wines and asking him to "transfer the Wines park to the school district, who could make a fine campus of it and...some day a magnificent high school building would be built in the center of it. The building would be named the "Margaret Wines High School".

But a park it became, and a delightful park it remains today. After the landscaping design of Nicholas Byhower was accepted, work commenced in the fall of 1915 on the \$1,025 project. The first phase was the Laying of the water pipe--a project done by Mayor W. F. Gurney and his son William. Bids were then let on the 260 trees, and 200 shrubs specified in Byhower's plans. However, due to the lateness of the year, it was decided to postpone land until the following spring.

In early 1918, a \$332.25 contract was signed between the city and Byhower for supplying the trees and shrubs as well as supervising the planting. The landscape architect selected thirty-eight varieties of trees including: silver maples

(48), green ash (38), Oriental sycamores (28), bollcand poplars (30), American lindens (30), mountain ash (10), horse chestnut (8), European lindens (8), and two to four of each of the following varieties: cut leaf maple, red maple, ailanthus, cut leaf birch, paper birch, catalpa bungei, black berry, black birch, purple birch, American elm, cork elm, western sycamore, prunus pissardi, pines, Judas tree, tulip tree, larch and cork tree.

The trees and shrubs arrived in town on April 24, 1916, and were immediately planted on the three-acre park by Byhower and a group of volunteers. To reduce the cost to the city, citizens were given the opportunity of purchasing the trees for \$1 each. Buyers names would then be entered by that specific tree on a park plat displayed in city hall. Though only 125 of these original trees and none of the shrubs remain today, the survivors have grown into a gorgeous canopy of shade. (This was written in the 1990's)

Over the years a number of improvements have been made to the park. In the earliest years, a wooden bandstand was erected. This was replace in 1940 by a bi-level cement bandstand with restrooms to the lower portions. Many pleasant summer "concerts under the stars" were enjoyed by music lovers before this facility was demolished in 1966 and replaced by new \$3,000 rest rooms with no facilities for band concerts.

The Athenian Club, a local literary group, erected a rock-masonry drinking fountain in 1936. Though this artistic structure has quenched the thirst of many park-goers throughout the years, the fountain is no longer functional. Today it remains where it was originally built. (It has been taken out now)

To the delight of Lehi children the city and other local organizations combined to develop a playground in the northeast corner of the park during the late 1930s. Initially this consisted of a slippery slide, swings, and tricky bars. Over the years, various clubs and organization have added to and improved this playground.

In the spring of 1950, the Lehi Garden Club planted a “Centennial Rose Garden” including 458 plants. This was later removed however, and the area sodded with grass. To accommodate picnics and barbeques, twin fireplaces and two large tables were installed on a raised cement platform in the northwest corner of the park in 1952. Lighted for nighttime functions, this work was soon completed, under the supervision of park caretaker Roy L. Ferman. The large tables still remain, but the poorly functioning fireplaces were recently removed.

In 1959, a twenty-two-by-twenty-eight foot cement platform, large enough to accommodate six tables, was constructed in the southeast corner of the park by the Lehi Jaycees. Since that time, small picnic areas have been constructed in the northeast and southwest corners.

Beginning in 1958, a Community Carnival was held annually in Wines Park. In the earliest years this festivity was used as a fundraiser for constructing the Hutchings Museum. Once this worthy project was completed, the carnival was utilized for a variety of causes. A typical year was 1978, when the event included a pet show, a freckle contest, old-time races, a boxing event, a greased pole climb and an auction. Concession stands included hot dogs, sloppy Joes, punch and cake. An all-day bake sale provided “mouth-watering goodies, homemade candy, jams and jellies.” Other attractions were a rummage sale, a fish pond, a dart throw, a basketball shoot, and even a gypsy fortune teller. An obstacle course assessed athletic ability and a nail-driving contest tested strong arms. The pony ride was a popular feature. And a professional dog groomer was there to spruce up pets. For shaggy humans, haircuts were available in a “Tonsorial Parlor”.

From the very beginning, Wines park has captured the fancy of almost everyone. Its location is convenient, its facilities functional, and its verdant lawns and abundant shade trees a welcome respite from sweltering summer days. Thousand of memorable reunions and picnics have been held there. Band concerts, carnivals, weddings, Boy Scout Courts of Honor, chuckwagon breakfasts, and children’s story hours are well remembered. The Lehi Miniature

Parade tradition got its start here, and numerous Blackhawk encampments in the park have enriched Lehi celebration over the years.

Although most of these events have been structured group affairs, many people come to the park for solitude--to dangle their bare feet in the cool irrigation ditch, to nap under the shade of those grand silver maples or to walk the pathways strewn with crunchy autumn leaves. Wines Park is a wonderful living memorial not only to Margaret Wines and the generosity of her husband, but also to the vision of politicians and townspeople who pursued the project despite jabs from critics.